

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method of locating one or more remote databases containing a desired type of data, comprising:

5 searching for at least one remote database accessible via a network of computer systems;

determining whether each remote database found during the searching is comprised of the desired type of data; and

10 storing location information for each remote database found during the searching if the remote database is comprised of the desired type of data.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting at least one remote database found during searching that is comprised of the desired type of data for use in a predetermined data analysis;

15 retrieving data from the selected remote database via the network of computer systems; and

using the data retrieved from the selected remote database in the predetermined data analysis.

20 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising for at least one remote database found during the searching that is comprised of the desired type of data:

storing an indication that the remote database is comprised of data that has been used in the predetermined data analysis.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising for at least one remote database that is comprised of data that has been used in the predetermined data analysis:

determining at a predetermined time interval whether the database has changed;

5 and

if the database has changed, updating the predetermined data analysis using the changed data.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the data that has been used in the predetermined data analysis is time series data, and the predetermined time interval is determined on the basis of the frequency of the time series data.

6. The method of claim 4, further comprising for the at least one predetermined data analysis that has been updated:

providing an indication to a predetermined user that the predetermined data analysis has been updated.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising for the at least one predetermined data analysis that has been updated:

providing the updated predetermined data analysis to a predetermined user.

8. The method of claim 2, wherein the predetermined data analysis is a forecast.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the forecast is an economic, demographic or meteorological forecast.

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10. The method of claim 2, wherein the predetermined data analysis is specified by a user.

11. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

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selecting at least one local database specified by a user, wherein the local database is comprised of the desired type of data for use in a predetermined data analysis;

retrieving data from the selected local database via the network of computer systems; and

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using the data retrieved from the selected local database in the predetermined data analysis.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing information about the number of times that a remote database containing the desired type of data is used in at least one predetermined data analysis; and

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if the number times the remote database is used in the predetermined data analysis exceeds a predefined value, storing locally the data used in the predetermined analysis.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising: receiving a specification of the desired type of data before the searching and the storing.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the desired type of data is time series
5 data.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining the type of data relevant to a predetermined analysis before the
searching and the storing.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising for each remote database found
during the searching that is comprised of the desired type of data:

determining information about at least one characteristic of the remote database;
and

15 storing the information about the at least one characteristic of the remote database
in association with the location information for the remote database.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the information about the at least one
characteristic of the remote database is selected from the group consisting of data
20 frequency, data units, data scale, data source, data update date, and number of data points.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein data frequency value is determined by calculating a time interval between individual data values of the desired type that are contained in the remote database.

5 19. The method of claim 16, wherein the at least one characteristic of the remote database is determined from at least one XML data definition tag that is associated with the remote database.

10 20. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
receiving from a user a specification of a desired remote database characteristic;
searching the stored remote database characteristic information; and
identifying one or more remote databases having the desired remote database characteristic.

15 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
providing information to the user identifying the one or more remote databases having the desired remote database characteristic.

20 22. The method of claim 44, wherein the searching for remote databases accessible via the network of computer systems comprises:
reading network address information for at least one computer system within the network of computer systems;

accessing the at least one computer system based on the network address information; and

retrieving information from the at least one computer system sufficient to determine whether the at least one computer system provides access to at least one remote database.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising using predefined communications protocol to access the at least one computer system and to process the information retrieved from the at least one computer system.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the predefined communications protocol is TCP/IP.

25. The method of claim 22, further comprising using predefined database formatting information to access the at least one computer system and to process the information retrieved from the at least one computer system.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined database formatting information is comprised of a plurality of predefined database format definitions.

27. The method of claim 1, wherein the searching for remote databases within the network of computer systems further comprises:

reading uniform resource locator (URL) information corresponding to at least one computer system accessible via the Internet;

accessing the at least one computer system via the Internet;

determining whether the at least one computer system provides access to at least one remote database; and

storing location information for the at least one computer system if the at least one
5 computer system provides access to the at least one remote database.

28. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining whether the at least one remote database is comprised of data of a desired type is further comprised of:

retrieving HTML formatted information from each computer system found that
10 provides access to at least one remote database; and

parsing the retrieved HTML formatted information to determine whether the at least one remote database is comprised of data of the desired type.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the HTML formatted information is
15 comprised of a meta tag.

30. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining whether the at least one remote database is comprised of data of the desired type is further comprised of:

retrieving XML formatted information from each computer system that provides
20 access to at least one remote database; and

parsing the retrieved XML formatted information to determine whether the at least one remote database is comprised of data of the desired type.

31. The method of claim 1, further comprising for each remote database found during the searching that is comprised of the desired type of data:

determining whether the remote database is comprised of at least one data series;

and

5 storing an indication of whether the remote database is comprised of at least one data series in association with the location information for the remote database.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising:

determining whether each of the at least one data series is comprised of data of

10 the desired type; and

storing an indication of whether each of the at least one data series is comprised of data of the desired type.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

15 for each of the at least one data series that is comprised of the desired type of data, identifying at least one characteristic of the data series; and

storing characteristic information for each data series in association with the location information for the remote database in which the data series is contained.

20 34. The method of claim 33, wherein the characteristic information is comprised of:

whether the at least one series of data is a time series of data.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the characteristic information is comprised of:

a number of data points in the at least one time series of data.

5 36. The method of claim 34, wherein the characteristic information is comprised of:

a starting time of the at least one time series of data;

an ending time of the at least one time series of data; and

10 a time interval between each of the data points contained in the at least one time series of data.

37. The method of claim 33, wherein the characteristic information is comprised of:

15 data series format information, wherein the data series format information is comprised of information about the format of the at least one series of data contained in the at least one database.

38. The method of claim 31, further comprising:

20 for each of the at least one data series that is comprised of the desired type of data, determining whether the at least one data series is redundant of a data series for which information has already been stored.

39. The method of claim 38, further comprising:

if the at least one data series is redundant of the data series for which information has already been stored, not storing information about the at least one data series.

40. The method of claim 38, further comprising:

5 if the at least one data series is redundant of the data series for which information has already been stored, storing information about the at least one data series and not storing information about the data series for which information has already been stored.

41. The method of claim 1, further comprising for at least one remote database

10 found during the searching:

determining whether a correlation exists between at least some of the data of the desired type contained in the at least one remote database and at least some of the data of the desired type contained in a predefined data set; and

15 if the correlation exists, storing an indication of the correlation in association with the stored location information for the at least one remote database.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein the predefined data set is comprised of economic data.

20 43. The method of claim 42, wherein the economic data is microeconomic data.

44. The method of claim 42, wherein the economic data is macroeconomic data.

45. The method of claim 41, wherein the predefined data set is comprised of
5 demographic data.

46. The method of claim 41, wherein the predefined data set is comprised of meteorological data.

10 47. The method of claim 1, further comprising for at least one remote database found during the searching:

determining a volatility measurement for at least some of the data of the desired type contained in the at least one remote database; and

15 storing the volatility measurement in association with the stored location information for the at least one remote database.

48. The method of claim 1, further comprising for at least one remote database found during the searching:

20 determining a seasonality measurement for at least some of the data of the desired type contained in the at least one remote database; and

storing the seasonality measurement in association with the stored location information for the at least one remote database.

49. A computer-implemented method of identifying one or more remote databases that contain a desired type of data, the method comprising:

searching for a remote database accessible via a network of computer systems;

5 storing location information for each remote database found during the searching;
and

storing an indication of whether each remote database found during the searching is comprised of the desired type of data.

10 50. A memory for storing information relating to at least one remote database accessible via a network of computer systems, the at least one remote database being comprised of a desired type of data, the memory comprising a data structure, the data structure comprising:

15 a database key, wherein the database key uniquely identifies the at least one remote database; and

location information for the at least one remote database, the location information being stored if the at least one remote database is comprised of the desired type of data, and the location information being stored in association with the database key.

20 51. The memory of claim 50, wherein the location information for the at least one remote database is stored regardless of whether the remote database is comprised of the desired type of data, and the data structure further comprising:

data type information, wherein the data type information indicates the type of data contained in the at least one remote database, the data type information being stored in association with the database key.

5 52. The memory of claim 51, wherein the data type information indicates whether the at least one remote database is comprised of the desired type of data.

53. The memory of claim 51, wherein the data type information indicates whether the type of data contained in the at least one remote database is time series data.

10 54. The memory of claim 50, the data structure further comprising:
database descriptive information about the at least one remote database, the database descriptive information being stored in association with the database key.

15 55. The memory of claim 50, the data structure further comprising:
database usage information, wherein the database usage information indicates that the at least one remote database is comprised of data that has been used in the predetermined data analysis, the database usage information being stored in association with the database key.

20 56. The memory of claim 50, the data structure further comprising:

database update information, wherein the database update information is comprised of information about when the at least one remote database was last updated, the database update information being stored in association with the database key.

5 57. The memory of claim 50, wherein the at least one database is comprised of at least one series of data, the data structure further comprising:

 a data series key for the at least one series of data, wherein the data series key uniquely identifies the at least one series of data; and

10 location information for the at least one series of data, the location information being stored in association with the data series key.

 58. The memory of claim 57, the data structure further comprising:

 data series descriptive information about the at least one data series, the data series descriptive information being stored in association with the data series key.

15 59. The memory of claim 57, wherein the at least one series of data is a time series of data.

 60. The memory of claim 59, the data structure further comprising:

20 a number of data points in the at least one time series of data, the number of data points being stored in association with the data series key.

 61. The memory of claim 59, the data structure further comprising:

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a starting time of the at least one time series of data, the starting time being stored in association with the data series key;

an ending time of the at least one time series of data, the ending time being stored in association with the data series key; and

5 a time interval between each of the data points contained in the at least one time series of data, the time interval being stored in association with the data series key.

62. The memory of claim 57, the data structure further comprising:

10 data series usage information, wherein the data series usage information indicates that the at least one data series is comprised of data that has been used in the predetermined data analysis, the data series usage information being stored in association with the data series key.

63. The memory of claim 57, the data structure further comprising:

15 data series update information, wherein the data series update information is comprised of information about when the at least one data series was last updated, the data series update information being stored in association with the data series key.

64. The memory of claim 57, the data structure further comprising:

20 data series format information, wherein the data series format information is comprised of information about the format of the at least one series of data contained in the at least one remote database, and the data series format information being stored in association with the data series key.

65. The memory of claim 50, the data structure further comprising:
database subscription information, wherein the database subscription information
is comprised of information about whether payment is required to access the data
5 contained in the at least one remote database.

66. The memory of claim 50, the data structure further comprising:
database access authorization information, wherein the database access
authorization information is comprised of information necessary to access the data
10 contained in the at least one remote database.

67. The memory of claim 66, wherein the database access authorization
information is comprised of user identification information and a password.

68. A computer readable media comprising software for instructing a
computer system to:
search for at least one remote database accessible via a network of computer
systems;
determine whether each remote database found during the searching is comprised
20 of the desired type of data; and
store location information for each remote database found during the searching if
the remote database is comprised of the desired type of data.

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69. A computerized apparatus for locating one or more remote databases containing a desired type of data, comprising:

a computer;

5 at least one remote database, the at least one database being accessible by the computer via a network of computer systems; and

location information for each remote database, the location information being stored in the computer if the remote database is comprised of the desired type of data.

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